



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### 1958 ALASKA FISHERY REGULATIONS APPROVED

Forecasts by Director Donald L. McKernan of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries that the pink salmon runs in southeastern Alaska should be considerably better this year than in the previous comparable period are reflected in some relaxation in the 1958 commercial fishing regulations approved today by Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton.

The Department's action, which will permit a small increase in fishing effort by the principal forms of gear used in the fishery, represents the first relaxation of the substantial curtailments which were instituted in 1954 in an effort to halt the decline of the salmon fishery.

"Rehabilitation of the pink salmon runs in Southeastern Alaska", McKernan reported to the Secretary, "was started in 1954. The program consisted principally of a reduction in trap fishing effort and on increases in closed areas where purse seines are normally used. This resulted in increased escapements, particularly in the even-year cycle. Pink salmon have a two-year cycle, and since our data indicate that the 1958 runs should be a great deal better than the parent year of 1956, some relaxation is warranted."

Secretary Seaton stated that he has directed the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries to maintain a close watch on the fish runs in Southeastern Alaska. "If this prediction of a better run of pink salmon does not materialize," the Secretary declared, "immediate steps will be taken to assure proper conservation."

Assistant Secretary Leffler assured Secretary Seaton that the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries will, if necessary, exercise the authority contained in the 1958 regulations providing for the immediate reduction in the use of fish traps and other gear or further restrictions to conserve the fish runs.

The Secretary requested Mr. Leffler to report to him periodically on the progress of this year's salmon run.

The use of drum seines and power blocks on purse seine boats in Southeastern Alaska, restricted as a part of the restoration program in 1954, will be permitted this year. The use of this more efficient gear has been permitted in previous seasons elsewhere in Alaska.

The regulations approved today will permit utilization of a maximum of 246 of the 406 available fish trap sites for all of Alaska. This compares with 247 fish trap sites used in 1956, which is a comparable year because of the two-year life cycle of pink salmon, the major species involved.

The pink salmon fishery in Prince William Sound in 1958 will be controlled by a gear timetable in which the closing date is automatically adjusted according to the number of units of gear fished.

There are no substantial changes in the commercial regulations concerning Cook Inlet, Kodiak, and Chignik.

The closing date for the pink salmon fishery on the south side of the Alaska Peninsula has been tentatively set for August 5, but with the prospect that it may have to be closed earlier if expected runs do not materialize. The fall season opens Monday, August 18.

A few gill-net boats fished in 1957 in the Unimak District, and in line with policy established in other areas, such fishing is being prohibited since the runs of red salmon taken there are known to be destined for Bristol Bay and are fully utilized by existing gear.

The runs of red salmon in Bristol Bay are expected to be smaller than in 1957 and greater protection will be given the runs during the coming year.

The interest shown last year by Assistant Secretary Leffler in the problem of reducing materially the unsporting practice of salmon snagging in Alaska has led to an amendment which will control the size of hooks that may be used in personal-use fishing. This problem of snagging salmon on the spawning grounds has become serious in the vicinity of a number of population centers, and was particularly bad last year in the Salcha River near Fairbanks where numbers of king salmon of such poor quality as to be unfit for human consumption were snagged off the spawning grounds.

The Assistant Secretary personally observed the practice and declared: "The unpleasant byproducts of this snagging practice are a step backward rather than forward in conservation education." He stated further: "If this regulation is not sufficiently effective to control the practice, it may be necessary to close certain rivers to sport fishing for salmon entirely."

The regulations as issued this year have been completely recodified for the first time since 1949. The opportunity was taken while recodifying to remove repetitious language and to adopt the use of abbreviations and symbols throughout the regulations. The resulting document should be more readable and useful to the public.

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